

From: Jennifer Norman

Sent: Wednesday, May 17, 2023 10:00 AM

To: TXSDdb_Corpus-Operation <corpus_operation@txs.uscourts.gov>;
Stephanie.Muth@dfps.texas.gov

Subject: Region 6 RCCI

CAUTION - EXTERNAL:

CPS is a system that was designed to serve and protect disadvantaged children. But in the 2 years I've worked for the department I have observed how broken the system truly is. The system has not only failed the children in state care but also the employees working for the state. When you question directives that hinder a child's safety they label it initially as policy and then state its best practice. I've had 4 PAs since starting the position with RCCI and since the beginning was informed that 10 hours of OT would be allotted weekly. We were told that proof of work guaranteed approval for OT pay. In March, under the leadership of division administrator Jana Jordan and deputy director Carmen Garza we were informed OT would need to be approved prior to working but best practice would be to flex your time because they would no longer be paying OT moving forward. When you're seeing multiple victims, collateral children, alleged perpetrators, as well as, collateral staff, it's not possible to interview and document/record everything within 24 hours without working OT especially if you were in the field all day traveling. This is especially difficult when you receive multiple cases in 1 week due to the influx of intakes coming in. I quickly realized that it's no longer about the safety of children but is actually about meeting the daily quota.

I learned that with each person in leadership, every directive is disguised as policy with everyone requiring something different from the last leader. It's very hard to follow a directive when things are constantly changing, without a clear understanding of what is expected of you. Since I've been with the state, my work ethic has never been questioned until Jana Jordan was appointed over Region 6 in Houston in March of 2023. While I was on vacation one of my cases was placed on the overdue list, due to it sitting until I returned back to work. I took the initiative to have a couple of coworkers interview collateral kids for my cases while I was out. When I returned to work I was placed on a work plan. My remote access was suspended until further notice and I had to work from the office daily until I could complete the task for one case. As I prepared for a short approved vacation, I was informed by my supervisor Amanda McElroy to submit a "to-do" list for my caseloads. It would need to include pending tasks that needed to be completed while I was out. Interviews were completed with kids while I was out, but no other tasks were completed. Shortly, after my return my supervisor was terminated from the agency. Work continued to be toxic and hostile. I had a coaching meeting that addressed my delegation to co-workers to interview collateral kids. I was informed at this meeting that I needed to do my own work moving forward. This was shocking because I've conducted interviews for other coworkers in the past and it's never been an issue. I was told I had accumulated 300 hours of OT and was the "region's highest-paid employee" also in the coaching. When I requested documentation

to prove that statement I was informed the information was confidential and could not be forwarded to me. I was told if I couldn't flex my time moving forward I would no longer be paid for OT. I requested 4 weeks of vacation at either the end of December or beginning of January to start 5/29-7/3 to return to work 7/5 since 7/4 is a holiday. My vacation was approved by my previous supervisor Amanda McElroy and the previous interim program administrator Rodney Bergeron with no issues. I took the same 4 weeks off in 2022. At the end of March I was informed that Jana Jordan retracted my vacation stating DFPS policy only allows 3 weeks off per year. Once again I requested this policy since I took a total of 7 weeks off in 2022. But it was never provided to me. I was never given a reason for what disciplinary action prompted the coaching other than this was at the request of Jana Jordan. I have sacrificed my work life balance to get my work done and submitted on time and to be informed I will no longer be paid for the overtime hours I worked is abusive, bullying behavior, and a violation of my rights.

Overall the mismanagement of RCCI region 6 and the high turnover rate of investigators need to be addressed. Investigators are afraid to speak up due to the retaliatory behavior we have observed in the workplace. Fear, intimidation, and retaliation are at an all-time high. People, like myself, would rather resign leaving the agency altogether and/or transfer to another department instead of continuing to be stressed out on a daily basis due to mistreatment, miscommunication, and disrespect. In every abuse and neglect investigation, when a new intake comes in, we are told to speak with the victim at school away from their accusers. So it's shocking to me that it's expected for us as employees to speak up when those that did are no longer with the agency. I personally reached out to deputy associate commissioner Clint Cox to address my grievances and concerns. But due to me being out on FMLA Mr. Cox was limited in what he could say regarding the issues I brought to him. I no longer feel safe returning to work under their leadership and have decided to resign from my position effective immediately 5/17/2023.

I truly hope something can be done or the risk and safety of the children in state care will continue to be in jeopardy because the state is continuously losing great people who are here to serve and protect the children in care.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Norman